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Canada

Speaking Notes for

THE HONOURABLE ROB NICHOLSON, P.C., Q.C.,
M.P. for Niagara Falls

Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada

for the
Announcement of Tabling of Identity Theft Legislation

Ottawa, Ontario
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Check against delivery

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

I am pleased to be here with my colleague Minister Blackburn to announce another step in our Government's plan toward tackling crime and strengthening the security of Canadians, as set out in the *Speech from the Throne* .

Just a few minutes ago, I tabled legislation in the House of Commons to amend the *Criminal Code* in the area of identity theft ☐ making it an offence to obtain, possess or traffic in other people's identity information if it is to be used to commit a crime.

Identity theft is considered by law enforcement officials as one of the fastest growing problems in North America . Every day, the issue of identity theft affects or threatens more Canadian families and businesses.

Identity theft is costly to banks, retailers and consumers alike. The Canadian Council of Better Business Bureaus has estimated that identity theft may cost Canadian consumers, banks and credit card firms, stores and other businesses more than $2 billion annually.

Identity theft has an impact on the daily lives of Canadians. It can affect our families, our businesses, our homes, our health and our bank accounts. And that is quite apart from the enormous emotional impact it has on its victims.

As it stands now, there are already offences in the *Criminal Code* that cover the misuse of another person's identity information, such as identity fraud, personation and forgery.

But these offences generally do not cover the preliminary steps that lead up to identity fraud ☐ the collecting, possessing and trafficking in identity information. These constitute identity theft.

I dentity theft is being used to further or facilitate not only fraud, but also organized criminal activity and terrorism. It has become especially attractive to organized criminals because it poses a low risk of detection and a chance of high financial reward.

Advances in technology make it easier to collect information, and criminal operations further cover their tracks by involving many different people, each engaging in one part of the operation, to make it more difficult to find and prosecute offenders.

This legislation intends to give police and prosecutors additional tools to address these complex criminal activities □ and stop this activity before the damage is done.

This legislative proposal is one in a new series of bills the Government of Canada will be introducing in this new session of Parliament aimed at tackling community crime.

This series follows the introduction of comprehensive *Tackling Violent Crime Act* that aims to better protect youth from sexual predators, protect society from dangerous offenders, get serious with drug-impaired drivers and toughen sentencing and bail for those who commit serious gun crimes.

In addition to our plan to protect Canadians against identity theft, our Government has

- introduced a National Anti-Drug Strategy, including legislation that would provide mandatory jail time for serious drug crimes, which I just announced yesterday;
- tabled legislation to strengthen the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* and announced a comprehensive review of this Act in 2008;
- invested in crime prevention community projects across Canada that target youth;
- passed legislation to increase penalties for those convicted of street racing; and
- passed legislation to end conditional sentences for serious crimes such as personal injury offences.

Our Government is committed to protecting Canada 's citizens.

Today's new legislation will go one step further in tackling the crimes that affect Canadians the most. That is what our Government was elected to do, and we will continue doing it, to provide strong leadership and a better Canada .

Thank you. Now my colleague Minister Blackburn will say a few words□

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